LOYAL PUBLICATION SOCIETY,
863 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

No. 35.

THE

ARGUMENTS OF SECESSIONISTS.

A

LETTER TO THE UNION MEETING,

Held in New York, September 30, 1863.

BY FRANCIS LIEBER.

New York:
HOLMAN, BOOK AND JOB PRINTER, COR. OF CENTRE AND WHITE STS.
1863.

LETTER

TO THE

UNION MEETING.

Gentlemen,—I regret that your invitation to address the citizens who will assemble to-morrow evening for the purpose of ratifying the nominations for our approaching State elections, came to hand so late that previous engagements make it impossible for me to accept it. I should otherwise have felt great pleasure in contributing my humble share to the important meeting.

The State elections which will soon take place in Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, and other portions of our imperiled country, are of the last importance with reference to the issue of our great war, to the character of our foreign relations—now of a magnitude to which they have never before attained—and to the serious condition of affairs within the different Northern States.

The arguments urged against us in our present struggle, manifold as they are, may be reduced to the following main points:

Secession, it has been urged, *is* revolution; it is a struggle for independence; and what right have you, whose entire government and national existence are founded on the idea that there exists such a thing as a right of revolution, according to which a new government may be established—what right have you to resist the South if its people choose to establish a separate polity? All my friends who return from Europe tell me that this is the ever-repeated argument dinned in the ears of Northerners traveling in that portion of the globe. This argument sounds, indeed, as if separation, without any reference to the reasons or objects,

were justifiable, simply because it *is* separation, as though disintegration of itself were a valuable thing. The lopping off a branch from a noble tree might as well be recommended, because it is lopping off. Is ruthless destruction more commendable than organic cohesion? The South do not fight for independence, as the British statesman pronounced it at the earliest stage of our civil war, for the very simple reason that the South never was dependent; on the contrary, it has always predominated. There is not a single point of resemblance between our Revolution and the rebellion of the South. Take our Declaration of Independence, go through the reasons given there for our separation from Great Britain, one by one, and it will be found that not a solitary one is claimed or could be claimed by the South against us. We formed distant colonies, and all large transmarine colonies are destined, in the course of history, to form, at some period or other, independent empires. Who doubts it of New South Wales? The South formed no distant dependency of ours; no sea separates it from us; but, on the contrary, it forms part and parcel of one great continuous country, marked as one by the dignified geography of our land and the many uniting rivers, as well as by the history of the people, and of their better institutions. Our fathers separated from England, after long hesitation, on the solemnly-avowed ground of liberty. They considered themselves oppressed; they believed all men entitled to certain rights. The South separates on the avowed ground of Slavery. That word, idolized by them, and turned away from with bitter aversion by all other men, is inscribed on their banner. There you read in red letters, Slavery, our Corner-Stone.

Mr. Chevallier, in his last pamphlet, states, among many other absurdities, that the North has no *ideas*, but the South gallantly fights for *ideas*. If we are void of ideas, what then induced the many hundred thousand of our brethren and sons to march, battalion after battalion, to confront the enemy? But even if we were very paupers in ideas, would an empty head not be better than a brain that has but one idea, and that one idea *Slavery?* I make free to say to our Gallican censor, and Imperial Senator, that ideas have no value of themselves. Every thing depends upon whether the ideas are pure or vicious, wise or foolish, great or little. A burglar has also his very distinct idea, for which he

works sedulously, ingeniously, and sometimes heroically; but somehow or other, we do not like his idea, and try to stop it, and to substitute for it another idea, such as Sing Sing, or Auburn.

Yet, even were it otherwise, is it then wholly forgotten that a revolution implies two parties, who must fight it out; and we, the one of the interested parties, must be acknowledged to have the right of saying No? If it were not so, there would be no revolution. We fight in this, our trying struggle, emphatically for our own. We fight for the integrity of our country, of which Louisiana or Georgia belongs to me, as citizen of the United States, quite as much as to any Georgian or Louisiana man; and I have a right as well as the duty to fight for it as much so as a Frenchman would have to fight for his France should Languedoc declare itself independent on some unlucky day.

But say others, and it is sad to observe there are many Northerners of great notoriety among them, we have no right to fight the South, inasmuch as they, being sovereign States, had a sovereign right to secede. We deny it. We maintain that the word sovereignty applied to our States has merely slipped into our political language—merely slipped in, and much mischief has it done. The Constitution does not contain the word once from beginning to end. Let us, however, for argument's sake accept this position. Either the South had a perfect right to secede, or it had no such right. If the latter, we are of course right in fighting for our Government, for Law, and Country; and if the South had a right to secede, why then they constitute a sovereign nation, and we, being a sovereign nation too, have, according to all law of nations, the right of conquering another sovereign nation.

Again, it is said that in fighting against the South we fight against the first of all American principles, namely, that which ascribes the foundation and essence of all true and good government to the consent of the governed. Mr. O'Sullivan, a New Yorker, I am grieved to say, calls this principle "Americanism," in a pamphlet, of which a large number has been sent from England to the United States, to convert those who stubbornly *resist* the South. It is a very sad production, yet not without its humor. Thus Mr. O'Sullivan urges upon every patriot in the North the duty of repudiating our own debt, and of assuming the debts of the South. But to leave the jocose part of the pamphlet, the pam-

phleteer declares that every Northern Democrat is in duty bound to acknowledge the right of the South to establish a government on the consent of the governed. "Americanism" is not exclusively American. The Netherlanders pronounced it long ago, and we ask has this principle reference to the foundation of a government and the permanent enacting of laws, or to each case in which government acts? Far the greater portion of all business which a government has to perform, consists in making certain people do what they do not consent to. If a policeman collars a pickpocket, must he let off the offender in all cases in which the criminal does not consent to be collared, which I suppose would form the majority of cases?

Lastly, I would mention the argument of sentimentality. The Southerners are our brethren, we are told—let us not imbrue our hands in the blood of our brethren, even if they are erring ones. A cut-throat is our brother, too, before the Most High, who alone can distinguish which of us is essentially the greatest sinner, weighing education, temptation, and want; but this does not prevent a Judge from sentencing him if duly convicted. Blood is a sad thing, but it can not always be prevented, nor is it the worst thing. The sentimentality argument seems so futile that it would not have been referred to, were it not very frequently used by our peace men, who in truth ought to call themselves *piece* men, for what they drive at, or what the adoption of their measures would surely lead to, is the hewing and hacking of our country to pieces.

Let us put our utmost zeal to our coming election, so that, among other things, the draft be carried out fairly, fully, and honestly. It is necessary, and becomes the more urgently so, the nearer we draw to the end; for we must fill up our regiments gallantly thinning before the enemy, and we shall stand in need of a large army for the period when the country shall pass from the state of tumultuous rebellion to returning and supported peace and order.

The flattering violence with which I have occasionally been assailed, might induce some people to believe that my authority must be of some weight. I am far from claiming it, but I ask, nevertheless, permission to state, in conclusion, that in my deliberate opinion the draft is constitutional, legal, and necessary; that England has never given up the right of drafting, and ab-

stains from making use of it only for foreign wars—not, however, upon any constitutional grounds; that every great people must resort to drafting in large and prolonged wars, unless the Prussian system be adopted, according to which every man, without exception, is obliged to serve, and does serve, even in times of peace, for a limited period; that no nation is worthy of the name that can not stand a draft in times of emergency; nor can it maintain its position among the great and leading nations of the earth if it can not, on occasion, furnish its government with an army proportionate to its own greatness; and that, lastly, a foreigner by birth, who comes to this country to enjoy its material advantages and the freedom she bountifully grants to all, natives or adopted, makes an inadequate return for these benefits when, in times of need, he disclaims the duty of fighting for these benefits, and throws away the right and privilege to fight for her.

With my best wishes for the success of your meeting.

Your very obedient,

FRANCIS LIEBER.

New York, Sept. 29, 1863.